DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 841 24 RE 003 035

AUTHOR	Schwenn, Elizabeth A.; And Others
TITLE	The Effect of Individual Adult-Child Conferences on the Independent Reading of Elementary School Children. Report from the Project on Situational Variables and Efficiency of Concept Learning.
INSTITUTION	Wisconsin Univ., Madison. Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
REPORT NO	TR-125
BUREAU NO	BR-5-0216
PUB DATE	Mar 70
CONTRACT	OEC-5-10-154
NOTE	26p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.40
DESCRIPTORS	*Conferences, Grade 2, Grade 4, Grade 6, *Independent Reading, *Individual Counseling, *Individual Reading, Motivation Techniques, *Reading Interests

ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of individual adult-child conferences in increasing the independent reading of elementary school children was investigated. During an 8-week baseline period, data on the number and difficulty level of books read by students in grades 2, 4, and 6 were gathered. Subjects in the upper one-third of reading-value scores (difficulty level of books read) were not included in the sample. The remaining 116 subjects were assigned to one of three conference conditions: (1) no conference, (2) conference conducted by a teacher's aide, and (3) conference conducted by the homeroom teacher. The conference procedure was based on behavioral objectives for the conference and motivational principles. The latter included modeling, reinforcement, feedback, and goal setting. During the 8-week period the conferences were in effect, they resulted in significant increases in the amount of reading engaged in by elementary school children. Both conference procedures resulted in greater gains in number of books read over the no-conference condition. (Author/WB)

OE/BR 5-0216
PA-24
RE

TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 125

THE EFFECT OF INDIVIDUAL ADULT-CHILD CONFERENCES ON THE INDEPENDENT READING OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

REPORT FROM THE PROJECT ON SITUATIONAL VARIABLES AND EFFICIENCY OF CONCEPT LEARNING

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

WISCONSIN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LEARNING

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Madison, Wisconsin

U.S. Office of Education
Grant No. G-03
Contract OE 5-10-154

UNIVERSITATIS WISCONSINENSIS SIGILLUM
NUMQUAM LUMEN LUMEN

RESEARCH
COGNITIVE LEARNING
DEVELOPMENT

ED040841

Technical Report No. 125

THE EFFECT OF INDIVIDUAL ADULT-CHILD CONFERENCES ON THE INDEPENDENT READING OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

by

Elizabeth A. Schwenn, Juanita S. Sorenson, and James Bavry

Report from the Project on Situational Variables
and Efficiency of Concept Learning
Herbert J. Klausmeier, Principal Investigator

Wisconsin Research and Development
Center for Cognitive Learning
The University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

March 1970

NATIONAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Samuel Brownell
Professor of Urban Education
Graduate School
Yale University

Launor F. Carter
Senior Vice President on Technology and Development
System Development Corporation

Francis S. Chase
Professor
Department of Education
University of Chicago

Henry Chauncey
President
Educational Testing Service

Martin Deutsch
Director, Institute for Developmental Studies
New York Medical College

Jack Edling
Director, Teaching Research Division
Oregon State System of Higher Education

Elizabeth Koontz
Wage and Labor Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington

Roderick McPhee
President
Punahou School, Honolulu

G. Wesley Sowards
Director, Elementary Education
Florida State University

Patrick Suppes
Professor
Department of Mathematics
Stanford University

***Benton J. Underwood**
Professor
Department of Psychology
Northwestern University

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER POLICY REVIEW BOARD

Leonard Berkowitz
Chairman
Department of Psychology

Archie A. Buchmiller
Deputy State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction

Robert E. Grinder
Chairman
Department of Educational Psychology

Russell J. Hosler
Professor, Curriculum and Instruction

Clauston Jenkins
Assistant Director
Coordinating Committee for Higher Education

Herbert J. Klausmeier
Director, R & D Center
Professor of Educational Psychology

Stephen C. Kleene
Dean, College of Letters and Science

Donald J. McCarty
Dean
School of Education

Ira Sharkansky
Associate Professor of Political Science

B. Robert Tabachnick
Chairman, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Henry C. Weinlick
Executive Secretary
Wisconsin Education Association

M. Crawford Young
Associate Dean
The Graduate School

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Edgar F. Borgatta
Brittingham Professor of Sociology

Anne E. Buchanan
Project Specialist
R & D Center

Robin S. Chapman
Research Associate
R & D Center

Robert E. Davidson
Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology

Frank H. Farley
Associate Professor, Educational Psychology

Russell J. Hosler
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and of Business

***Herbert J. Klausmeier**
Director, R & D Center
Professor of Educational Psychology

Wayne Otto
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction (Reading)

Robert G. Petzold
Associate Dean of the School of Education
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and of Music

FACULTY OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Vernon L. Allen
Professor of Psychology

Ted Czajkowski
Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

Robert E. Davidson
Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology

Gary A. Davis
Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

M. Vere DeVault
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction (Mathematics)

Frank H. Farley
Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

Lester S. Golub
Lecturer in Curriculum and Instruction and in English

John G. Harvey
Associate Professor of Mathematics and of Curriculum and Instruction

Herbert J. Klausmeier
Director, R & D Center
Professor of Educational Psychology

Donald Lange
Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

James Moser
Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education; Visiting Scholar

Wayne Otto
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction (Reading)

Milton O. Pella
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction (Science)

Thomas A. Romberg
Associate Director, R & D Center
Professor of Mathematics and of Curriculum and Instruction

B. Robert Tabachnick
Chairman, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Richard L. Venezky
Assistant Professor of English and of Computer Sciences

Alan Voelker
Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

Larry Wilder
Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction

Peter Wolff
Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology

MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Herbert J. Klausmeier
Director, R & D Center
V.A.C. Henmon Professor of Educational Psychology

Mary R. Quilling
Director
Technical Development Program

Thomas A. Romberg
Associate Director

James Walter
Director
Dissemination Program

Dan G. Woolpert
Director
Operations and Business

* COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

STATEMENT OF FOCUS

The Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning focuses on contributing to a better understanding of cognitive learning by children and youth and to the improvement of related educational practices. The strategy for research and development is comprehensive. It includes basic research to generate new knowledge about the conditions and processes of learning and about the processes of instruction, and the subsequent development of research-based instructional materials, many of which are designed for use by teachers and others for use by students. These materials are tested and refined in school settings. Throughout these operations behavioral scientists, curriculum experts, academic scholars, and school people interact, insuring that the results of Center activities are based soundly on knowledge of subject matter and cognitive learning and that they are applied to the improvement of educational practice.

This Technical Report is from the Situational Variables and Efficiency of Concept Learning Project in Program 1. General objectives of the Program are to generate new knowledge about concept learning and cognitive skills, to synthesize existing knowledge, and to develop educational materials suggested by the prior activities. Contributing to these Program objectives, the Concept Learning Project has the following five objectives: to identify the conditions that facilitate concept learning in the school setting and to describe their management, to develop and validate a schema for evaluating the student's level of concept understanding, to develop and validate a model of cognitive processes in concept learning, to generate knowledge concerning the semantic components of concept learning, and to identify conditions associated with motivation for school learning and to describe their management.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project described in this paper was made possible through the efforts of many people. Our appreciation is expressed both to those named here who participated in specific roles and to the many others who helped in a variety of ways.

Teachers in the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Grades at Franklin School, Madison, who conducted conferences were Rosanne Jones, Donna Welbes, Helen LeBell, Lois Damashek, Kathryn O'Neill, Carol Larsen, Donald Ralph, and Kenneth Jones. The principal, Donald Stoddard, who maintained a long-time interest in this type of motivational procedure, and Unit Leaders, Joyce Peterson and Lera Woodring, contributed much toward organization and implementation of the project. Helen Moss, the librarian, was involved in selection and organization of the books. Mrs. Lenore Sticha, the instructional aide who conducted many of the conferences and who helped in data collection and organization, deserves special mention. Mrs. Delores VanderVelde, Madison Board of Education central system reading consultant, who guided the selection and evaluation of the paperback books which were placed in the classrooms, was a most important person in carrying out this project.

CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgments	iv
List of Tables	vii
Abstract	ix
I. Introduction	1
A System of Individually Guided Motivation	1
Behaviors Indicative of Motivation	1
Principles of Motivation	1
Research Background of Individual Conferences on Reading	2
II. Method	6
Subjects	6
Design and Procedure	6
Baseline Data	6
Assignment of Students to Treatment Groups	6
Conference Record-Keeping	7
Location and Scheduling	8
Conference Procedure	8
Behavioral Objectives of the Conferences	8
Motivational Principles Involved in Conferences	9
Materials	10
Data Gathered	10
III. Results	11
Number of Books	11
Reading-Value Scores	12
Achievement	13
Comparisons with Ideal Groups	14
IV. Discussion and Conclusions	16
References	18

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Behaviors Indicative of Motivation	2
2	Generalizations and Corollary Instructional Guides	3
3	Numbers of Students Assigned to Each Treatment Group Within Levels of Reading-Value and Reading-Achievement Groupings for Grades 2, 4, and 6	7
4	Mean Numbers of Books Read During the Baseline and Experimental Periods as a Function of Grade and Conference Condition	11
5	Mean Reading-Value Scores for the Baseline and Experimental Periods as a Function of Grade and Conference Condition	12
6	Mean Grade-Equivalent Scores in Reading Achievement for the Baseline and Experimental Periods in Grade 2 as a Function of Conference Condition and Achievement Level	13
7	Mean Grade-Equivalent Scores in Reading Achievement for the Baseline and Experimental Periods in Grades 4 and 6 as a Function of Conference Condition and Achievement Level	13

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of individual adult-child conferences in increasing the independent reading of elementary school children. During an 8-week baseline period, data on the number and difficulty level of books read by students in three grades (2, 4, and 6) were gathered. Only students who ranked in the lower two-thirds on this measure were included in the sample. Students were stratified into two reading achievement levels (high, low).

Within the three grades and two achievement levels, students were randomly assigned to either the conference or no-conference condition. In the conference condition, students met individually with an adult once a week for 5–10 minutes. Half of the students had conferences with their homeroom teacher; the other half had conferences with an instructional aide.

During the conference, the child reported on any independent reading he had done during the week. The adults had been instructed in how to implement such motivational principles as positive reinforcement, feedback, and modeling. The adult also helped the child select books to read independently. During the course of the study, large numbers of paperback books were made available to the children in each homeroom.

The experimental period lasted 8 weeks. Data were collected on the number of books read and the difficulty level of the books. Reading-achievement test scores were also obtained following the experimental period.

The results showed that while all three groups increased in number of books read from the baseline to the experimental periods, those students receiving conferences increased significantly more than students not receiving conferences. The superiority of the conference condition in increasing the amount of reading was true for all grades and reading-achievement levels. There was little difference between the teacher- and aide-conference conditions.

Although the conferences significantly increased the amount of the children's independent reading, they had little effect on the difficulty level of their reading. Nor did the conference condition produce a differential gain in reading-achievement. The lack of effect of the conferences on achievement-test scores was probably due to the relative brevity of the experimental period.

I
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of individual adult-child conferences in increasing the independent reading engaged in by elementary school children. The development of the particular type of individual conference used as a motivational device in the present experiment was guided both by the rational framework provided by the System of Individually Guided Motivation (Klausmeier, Schwenn, & Lamal, 1969) which is being developed at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center and by prior research on individual conferences. Both of these endeavors must be considered as the background for the present report.

A SYSTEM OF INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED MOTIVATION

Part of the on-going research and development activity of the project on Situational Variables and Efficiency of Concept Learning has been devoted to the development of a system of individually guided motivation. The basic components of the system include a statement of behaviors indicative of motivation, instruments and procedures for assessing these behaviors, a statement of principles of motivation which have a firm grounding in theory and research, and finally descriptions of teacher and student activities through which these principles can be implemented. The system of individually guided motivation is designed to be an integral part of a school's individually guided instructional program. Thus, many of the motivational procedures in the system have been developed within the context of a particular area of instruction. For example, the individual conferences investigated in the present experiment had as their substantive content certain aspects of the reading curriculum.

Behaviors Indicative of Motivation

In Table 1 are found behaviors generally indicative of motivation. The behaviors are stated at two levels of generality. Four general objectives are stated that deal respectively with motivation for: learning subject-matter knowledge and skills, developing independence from adults in connection with motivation, following school policies and practices in connection with conduct, and conceptualizing a value system. More specific behaviors related to each general objective are given. All of these behaviors, properly stated, are the objectives of a school's system of individually guided motivation. No one motivational procedure can attempt to achieve all of these objectives. That is, some selection from among these behaviors must be made in order to arrive at the objectives for a particular motivational procedure. Moreover, the objectives which are selected must be redefined in terms of the curriculum area within which the motivational procedure is utilized. Thus, in the case of the motivational procedure involving individual conferences in reading, certain of the objectives in Table 1 were selected and redefined in terms of reading behaviors.

Principles of Motivation

In the left column of Table 2, generalizations concerning motivation are given. These are conclusions drawn mainly from laboratory studies and related theorizing about motivation. In the right column instructional guides are listed that are parallel to the generalizations.[1] The first three generalizations deal primarily with motivational concerns related to the learning of school subject-matter; focusing of attention, goal setting and goal

---

[1]The heuristic and theory discussed were treated more systematically earlier in Klausmeier, H. J., and Goodwin, William, "Learning and Human Abilities," *Educational Psychology*, (2nd Ed.), New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Table 1

Behaviors Indicative of Motivation

A. The student starts promptly and completes self-, teacher-, or group-assigned tasks that together comprise the minimum requirements related to various curriculum areas.

1. Attends to the teacher and other situational elements when attention is required.
2. Begins tasks promptly.
3. Seeks feedback concerning performance on tasks.
4. Returns to tasks voluntarily after interruption or initial lack of progress.
5. Persists at tasks until completed.

B. The student assumes responsibility for learning more than the minimum requirements without teacher guidance during school hours and outside school hours. In addition to Behaviors 1–5, the student

6. Continues working when the teacher leaves the room.
7. Does additional work during school hours.
8. Works on school related activities outside school hours.
9. Identifies activities that are relevant for class projects.
10. Seeks suggestions for going beyond minimum amount or quality of work.

C. The student behaves in accordance with the school's policies and practices in connection with use of property, relations with other students, and relations with adults.

11. Moves quietly within and about the school building during quiet periods and activities.
12. Interacts harmoniously with other students.
13. Interacts harmoniously with the teacher and other adults.
14. Conserves own and other's property.
15. Tells other students to behave in accordance with school policies.

D. The student verbalizes a value system consistent with the preceding behaviors.

16. When asked, gives examples of his own actions illustrative of Behaviors 1–15.
17. When asked, gives reasons for manifesting Behaviors 1–15.

attainments, and providing informative feedback after activities are underway. The next two generalizations are more directly applicable to student conduct, dealing with the initial acquisition and subsequent conceptualization of self-control, self-reliance, persistence, and other prosocial behaviors. The last two generalizations are equally relevant to both learning and conduct. The generalizations and guides in Table 2 are stated in terms of motivation. But they can be restated in terms of subject-matter areas. The motivational procedures described in the system of individually guided motivation are essentially ways of implementing one or more of these instructional guides within the context of a particular subject-matter area. In the individual conferences to be described, several of the guides were implemented simultaneously in order to achieve objectives related to independent reading.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND OF INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES ON READING

For the past several years research has been carried out in order to determine the effectiveness of individual conferences with students of different characteristics. The first study on individual conferences was done at Steven Bull School in Racine during 1966–67 under the direction of the learning specialist, Mae Elsdon. The project was undertaken because the teachers in the Third Grade research and instruction unit at that school were concerned about the lack of pupil interest in independent reading. Thus, it was decided to use individual conferences combined with a system of concrete rewards to try to increase independent reading. Briefly, the motivational techniques utilized in the project were:

Table 2

Generalizations and Corollary Instructional Guides

Generalization	Instructional Guide
A. Properties of the environment may be manipulated and the students' perceptions may be modified in order to focus student attention toward learning tasks.	A. Focus student attention on desired objectives.
B. The individual's curiosity and his desires to manipulate and achieve control over elements of the environment may be utilized in directing activity used in goal setting.	B. Utilize the individual's curiosity and needs for manipulation and competence.
C. Setting and attaining goals require learning tasks at an appropriate difficulty level; feelings of success on current learning tasks heighten motivation for subsequent tasks; feelings of failure lower motivation for subsequent tasks.	C. Help each student set and attain goals related to the school's educational program.
D. Providing information concerning correct or appropriate behaviors and correcting errors are associated with better performance on and more favorable attitudes toward the learning tasks.	D. Provide for informative feedback.
E. Many prosocial behaviors indicative of self-control, self-reliance, and persistence are initially acquired through observing and imitating a model and are strengthened through reinforcement.	E. Bring exemplary real-life and symbolic models into the school setting.
F. Reasoning with students about prosocial values and behaviors provides a conceptual basis for the development of the behaviors.	F. Provide for verbalization of prosocial values.
G. The expectancy of receiving rewards for specified behavior or achievement directs and sustains attention and effort toward manifesting the behavior or achievement. Nonreinforcement after a response tends to extinguish the response. The expectancy of receiving punishment for manifesting undesired behavior may lead to suppression of the behavior, to avoidance or dislike of the situation, or to avoidance and dislike of the punisher.	G. Develop and use a system of rewards as necessary to secure sustained effort and desired conduct. Use punishment as necessary to eliminate and suppress misconduct.
H. Sustained high stress is associated with low performance, erratic conduct, and personality disorders.	H. Avoid the use of procedures that create temporary high stress or chronic anxiety.

1. Materials and books appropriate for the various reading levels were made available in the classrooms and school library.
2. Concrete rewards were used systematically. A reward system was set up whereby each child was given a reward after reading two books, another reward after five books, and then an additional reward after each successive five books. The rewards were such things as pencils, erasers, boxes of crayons, etc.
3. Individual conferences were conducted by volunteer aides from local women's groups. The aides visited each classroom one afternoon per week to discuss with each child the books he had read and to listen to him read. Each child received from 5 to 15 minutes of individual attention during the conferences. A list of books read by each child was kept by the volunteer.

The project lasted for 9 months, beginning in September 1966 and continuing through May 1967. During this time, the 72 students in the project read a total of 2074 books, the median being 21. Nine children read over 50 books each with three reporting on 70 or more. These figures, impressive enough by themselves, are even more so when one considers the fact that most of these children were doing no independent reading prior to the start of the project.

The students also showed progress in reading achievement. The mean grade equivalent scores for this class on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Primary C, in February were 2.6 for Vocabulary and 2.7 for Comprehension. In April, the mean for both scores was 3.0. Thus, in 2 months these students had gained the equivalent of 4 months in Vocabulary and 3 in Comprehension. These gains are even more meaningful because of the fact that these students were considerably below grade level on both measures in the beginning, so that it would have been predicted that they would have gained less than 2 months in this time interval. On the Stanford Achievement Test given in March, it was found that these students gained 1.5 years on the Word Meaning subtest and 1.2 years on the Paragraph Meaning subtest over the scores obtained at the beginning of Second Grade (a time interval of 5 months). This is an encouraging result because children such as these typically fall farther and farther behind each year.

The following year, 1967–68, a project on individual conferences was initiated at Franklin Elementary School in Madison. The purpose of the study was to provide further information on the conferences. Specifically, information was needed on the relative effectiveness of concrete rewards and conferences, since both were used in the Racine project. Even though there were problems with the experiment due to lack of control groups and sometimes inadequate baseline measures, the findings with regard to conferences *vs.* rewards are probably reliable. Thus, it was found that First and Second Grade children who received only the individual conferences on a systematic basis increased their independent reading as much as children who received rewards in addition to the conferences. Third and Fourth Grade children who received both conferences and rewards read more books than children in the same grades who received only rewards. Finally, Fifth and Sixth Grade children who only received concrete rewards did not, with only a few exceptions, increase their independent reading. It would seem that it is the individual conference *per se* which increases motivation for independent reading rather than concrete rewards.

While the above studies provide suggestive evidence that the individual conferences (with or without rewards) are effective in increasing independent reading, problems with both the design and execution in both studies prevent them from being conclusive. In the present study, also conducted at Franklin School, Madison, these difficulties were corrected and an attempt was made to precisely define both the objectives and procedures of the conferences.

Briefly, the present study involved the use of two experimental groups and one control group at each of three grade levels (2nd, 4th, and 6th). In one experimental group, the conferences were conducted by the regular homeroom teachers of the children; in the second experimental group, an instructional aide conducted all conferences. The control subjects received no conferences. Thus, it could be determined if the status of the adult conducting the conferences influenced their effectiveness. Included in the present study (but not in previous ones) was an attempt to truly individualize the conferences. This was accomplished through the collection of baseline data on each child for 2 months prior to the initiation of the conferences. Data on both the amount and difficulty level of each child's independent reading were assessed along with achievement scores in reading.

These characteristics of the children determined to a large extent how they were treated in the conferences. Also included in the present study were training sessions for the teachers and the aide in which they were instructed on how to implement the motivational principles employed in the conferences.

II
METHOD

SUBJECTS

Subjects for this project were students regularly enrolled in the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Grades at Franklin Elementary School, Madison, Wisconsin. Franklin School is an inner-city, racially mixed school that receives Title III funds. Complete sets of reading and achievement data were available for 68 Second Grade students, 58 Fourth Grade students, and 49 Sixth Grade students. The number of students who moved from the school district during the experimental period between October and May was extremely small: three Second Graders, four Fourth Graders, and four Sixth Graders.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Baseline Data

The number of books read by each student in Grades 2, 4, and 6 during an 8-week period in October and November 1968 was recorded. Each student kept a record of the title of the books he read and the date on which he completed them. Teachers helped some of the Second Graders record their books while Fourth and Sixth Graders kept their own records. Teachers also reminded the children to record the books they had read during each week period. Books read during the baseline period were classified as "above," "at," or "below" grade level using standard reference catalogues. A value of 3 was assigned to above-level books, 2 to at-level, and 1 to below-level books.

Students were selected to receive conferences based on the amount and quality of reading done during the baseline period. Students were placed in rank order according to the total value of books read during the baseline period. The total reading-value score was simply the sum of the values assigned to the books a child read. Those students with value scores in the upper 1/3 of the ranking were excluded from the project sample. This decision was based on the premise that since the upper third of the children were already doing a great deal of reading, motivational procedures to increase their reading would not benefit them as it would the lower group.

Reading achievement scores were obtained for each student. Reading scores were available for Fourth and Sixth Graders from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Form 3 which had been given in September 1968. Vocabulary and comprehension scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests given in September 1968 were available for Second Graders. Within each grade level, students were ranked from highest to lowest based on their achievement scores. Within each grade, students above the 50th percentile were designated as "high" in achievement and those below this point were designated as "low" in achievement. Since students had already been chosen for the project sample on the basis of their reading-value scores, achievement scores acted as a secondary criterion. Each student in the sample was designated as "low" in amount of reading and additionally as "high" or "low" in achievement. This additional information on achievement was necessary since the goals of the adult-child conference as well as the actual conference procedure differed for students low on both criteria as compared to those low in independent reading but high in reading achievement. Achievement scores for students in the upper third in the reading-value score ranking were also identified and, as might be expected, most of these students were also high in reading achievement.

Assignment of Students to Treatment Groups

Within each homeroom, those students low in both reading-value score and reading achievement were randomly assigned to the three treatment groups (control, teacher conference, or aide conference); similarly those low in reading-value score but high in reading

achievement were randomly assigned to the same treatment groups.

The three treatment groups were the control group which received no conferences, the teacher-conference group in which students had conferences with their homeroom teacher, and the aide-conference group in which an instructional aide conducted all conferences. Table 3 shows the number of subjects in each cell of the design at each grade level along with the numbers of students with high reading-value scores who were excluded from the project. There were eight teachers who conducted conferences: three teachers in the Second, three in the Fourth, and two in the Sixth Grade. The same aide conducted the conferences in all three grades. All children including those with high reading-value scores who were excluded from the sample kept a list of the books they read and the date on which they completed them during the experimental period.

Conference Record-Keeping

Record sheets on which students recorded the title of the books they read and the date they completed them were given to all students in Grades 2, 4, and 6 during the first week of the experimental period. Older children received these sheets in their homerooms while younger children received them in smaller groups or on an individual basis when they attended their first conference. Each week the teachers reminded those children not receiving conferences to record their books on the record sheets. In addition to record sheets on which students recorded titles and dates of books, the adult conducting

Table 3

Numbers of Students Assigned to Each Treatment Group Within Levels of Reading-Value and Reading-Achievement Groupings for Grades 2, 4, and 6

Grade 2

	Teacher Conference	Aide Conference	No Conference	
Reading Value = Low Achievement = Low	10	9	7	Number of Ss in upper 1/3 of reading-value scores who were excluded from sample = 22
Reading Value = Low Achievement = High	6	7	7	

N = 46

Grade 4

	Teacher Conference	Aide Conference	No Conference	
Reading Value = Low Achievement = Low	8	8	9	Ss in upper 1/3 of reading-value scores = 20
Reading Value = Low Achievement = High	5	5	3	

N = 38

Grade 6

	Teacher Conference	Aide Conference	No Conference	
Reading Value = Low Achievement = Low	8	6	6	Ss in upper 1/3 of reading-value scores = 17
Reading Value = Low Achievement = High	4	4	4	

N = 32

the conferences kept a Conference Comment Card. These cards indicated that a conference had been held and also provided a systematic record for each child from conference to conference. In addition, special problems a child might have were recorded here.

Location and Scheduling

Conferences were held regularly, once per week, over an 8-week period during March and April, 1969. If a student was absent for a conference, a make-up conference was held so that each student in the conference treatment groups had eight conferences with an adult. The average length of the conferences was 8–12 minutes. The locations of the conferences were varied: some in the hallway behind the stairway, in a small workroom, at a carrel in a corner, in a corner of a classroom, or at the teacher's desk.

Times for conferences varied. The aide was able to schedule her conferences mainly during independent study times during the school day. Teachers had more difficult scheduling problems but with the Multiunit plan at Franklin School, they could sometimes hold conferences while another teacher was working with the children. A more common practice was to hold conferences during special classes like art, physical education, or music, during recess periods, and after school. Students seemed to be anxious to have the conferences and were more than happy to attend the conference at any time.

After the conferences had run for 2 weeks, a meeting of all teachers and the aide involved in the conferences was held to discuss the progress and acceptance of the project and to ascertain any urgent problems that might have occurred. The response of the aide and teachers at this meeting indicated that the project had been extremely well accepted by the children and the adults, too, were very enthusiastic about the project. At the end of the project period, all record sheets and other materials were collected. Within 2 weeks after the close of the project period, after all children in the treatment groups had completed eight conferences, the fall achievement tests were administered again.

CONFERENCE PROCEDURE

The conference activities of both the adult and the student depended upon the objectives to be reached in the conferences with each child and the motivational principles employed in the conferences.

Behavioral Objectives of the Conferences

Prior to the initiation of the conferences, a list of behavioral objectives for the reading conferences was derived from the objectives of the total system of motivation as described in Table 1 in the introductory section of this report. Specific objectives related to the conferences were classified into three areas as follows:

1. Behaviors indicative of motivation which are general in nature and necessary for successful relationships to exist between the adult conducting the conference and the child. These behaviors include:
   a. The child comes to the conference on time.
   b. The child attends closely to the adult and other situational elements during the conference.
   c. The child begins his report promptly.
   d. The child reads from his book when asked.
   e. The child takes good care of books he is reading.
2. Behaviors related specifically to the child's reactions to reading. These behaviors include:
   a. The child expresses pleasant feelings about reading.
   b. When asked, the child tells about what he has read.
   c. When asked, the child tells why he reads.
   d. The child talks with other children and/or adults about his reading.
   e. The child reads on his own when adults are not present.
   f. The child goes beyond the minimum reading requirements for his group.
3. Behaviors related to improvement of independent reading skills and reading achievement. These behaviors include:
   a. The child independently reads more books, or longer books, or more difficult books during school hours and/or outside school hours during the period following initiation of the adult-child conferences.
   b. The child reads more rapidly after initiation of the adult-child conference.

c. The child's word recognition skills and reading comprehension improve more rapidly during and after the initiation of the conference situation.
d. The child's preference for independent reading increases for a child who found reading low on his list of preferred activities and remains constant for a child who preferred reading as an independent activity.

The objectives were discussed with the eight teachers and the aide conducting the conferences to be sure that the objectives were clearly stated.

During the conference period systematic data were gathered on some of the objectives (Area 3 a, c) related to amount and quality of independent reading and vocabulary and comprehension skills. For other objectives, particularly those related to the child's attitudes toward reading and to the relationship between the adult and child (Areas 1 and 2), the adults were instructed to note progress on their Conference Comment Cards.

Motivational Principles Involved in Conferences

During the course of the conferences, the adults provided models of desired reading behaviors for the child to observe and imitate, reinforced desired reading behaviors and attitudes of the child, informed the child of his progress in reading, and helped the child select goals in terms of books of an appropriate difficulty level related to the child's current interests. Not all of these were implemented in any one conference, but across the eight conferences each child was exposed to all of the principles. For the purposes of the conferences the motivational procedures were defined as follows:

MODELING: included such procedures as stating to the child that he (the adult) reads frequently and likes to read, starting to read a book as the child leaves the conference, and being engaged in reading when the child comes in for the conference. Modeling also included such procedures as informing the child of the reading behavior of a possible model and indicating the value of independent reading to other persons who may serve as models for the child.

REINFORCEMENT: took the form of smiling, nodding affirmatively, stating "good," "fine," etc. When the student showed that he had independently read a book or pages in a book. The adult also reinforced positive attitude statements about reading either made spontaneously by the child or in response to questions.

FEEDBACK: included informing the child of progress by telling him how many books or pages in a book he had accumulated. Feedback was also given on any improvement in word recognition or comprehension skills.

GOAL SETTING: took the form of helping the child select the next book of an appropriate difficulty level. The reading of the book or books then became the child's goal for the next conference.

During the child's first conference, the adult explained the purposes of the conferences and informed the child about keeping his record sheet. The adult also pointed out to the child the books which were available in his homeroom and school library and instructed him in how to check out the books he wanted. The remainder of the first conference was spent in helping the child select his first book(s). In subsequent conferences, the child was encouraged to report on the books he had read independently between conferences.

For those students who were low in reading-value score but high in reading achievement, the adult emphasized the use of modeling and reinforcement to encourage independent reading. With students low in reading achievement much more emphasis was placed on improvement of reading skills by having the children read orally in the conference and by informal drilling on word recognition and comprehensive skills. Feedback and positive reinforcement along with goal setting played a major role in conferences with this kind of child.

In two 2-hour meetings prior to the experimental period the teachers and aide were instructed in how to conduct the conferences. The training sessions consisted, in part, of discussions of how to implement the motivational principles employed in the conferences with the two classifications of children. Other training time was spent in viewing a video tape which illustrated the principles in an actual conference setting and in listening to tape recordings of actual adult-child conferences.

MATERIALS

Materials for this project included a readily available supply of books in each homeroom, a form on which students could record titles of books read and a Conference Comments Card kept by adults.

Paperback books that included a wide variety of subject matter and areas of interest and a wide range of difficulty were placed in each Second, Fourth, and Sixth Grade homeroom. The paperback books were selected by the Franklin School Librarian and Madison Reading Consultant to insure this diversity. About 60–70 books were placed in each homeroom of approximately 25 students. The students had access to them during independent study time as well as before and after school sessions. An easy check-out system in which the student simply wrote his name on an index card contained in the books and dropped the card in a box near the display of books was instituted. In some homerooms, books were displayed on a bookshelf and in others they were kept in portable book holders made out of large corrugated paper boxes. It was suggested that students not check out more than two books at one time so that all children might have an opportunity to read them. It should be noted that all children in Grades 2, 4, and 6, regardless of experimental group, had equal access to the books.

Mimeographed record forms that contained spaces for the student's name, homeroom, titles of books, and book completion date were given to all children in the three grades.

Conference Comment Cards kept by the teacher or aide who conducted the conference had a space for comments on the child's problems and progress in each of the eight conferences.

DATA GATHERED

The data gathered included (1) The number and title of the books read by each student in Grades 2, 4, and 6 during the 8-week baseline period before the conferences started. These books were assigned values for above-, at-, and below-grade reading level. (2) Pretest and posttest achievement scores for each student in Grades 2, 4, and 6. These achievement scores were from the reading section of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Form 3, for Grades 4 and 6 and from the vocabulary and comprehension sections of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests for Grade 2. (3) Number and title of books read during the 8-week experimental period for all students in Grades 2, 4, and 6. As with the baseline data, these books were assigned values for difficulty level.

In addition to the numerical data, the Conference Comment Cards which contained comments from the adults, either teacher or aide, conducting the conferences were a source of descriptive data.

III
RESULTS

The three dependent variables of interest in the present experiment were the number of books read per student during the baseline and experimental periods, the reading-value scores, and achievement-test scores. The results for each measure are presented in order.

NUMBER OF BOOKS

In Table 4 are presented the mean number of books read during the baseline and experimental periods for each grade as a function of conference condition. The average gain in number is also given. For each condition at each grade level there was a substantial gain in the number of books read from the baseline to experimental periods. The mean gains were greater for the teacher and aide-conference conditions than for the no-conference condition at each grade, and the gain in reading appeared to decrease in the higher grades.

A fixed-effects analysis of variance was performed on the gain scores. Orthogonal contrasts among the conference conditions showed the average of the teacher and aide conditions to differ significantly from the no-conference condition ($F = 5.58$; $df = 1,107$; $p < .05$). The teacher and aide-conference conditions did not differ from one another, however. Grade 2 showed significantly more gain than did Grades 4 and 6 ($F = 10.73$; $df = 1,107$; $p < .01$) and Grade 4 gained more than grade 6 ($F = 3.79$; $df = 1,107$; $p < .05$). Grade level and conference condition did not interact.

Thus, children in all grades who received

Table 4

Mean Numbers of Books Read During the Baseline and Experimental Periods as a Function of Grade and Conference Condition*

Grade		Conference Condition			Mean Gain
		No-Conference	Teacher	Aide	
2	Baseline	3.36	3.88	3.06	
	Experimental	13.00	18.63	16.13	
	(Gain)	9.64	14.75	13.07	12.49
4	Baseline	3.75	3.85	3.77	
	Experimental	11.17	11.77	16.38	
	(Gain)	7.42	7.92	12.61	9.32
6	Baseline	4.00	3.75	3.40	
	Experimental	6.80	9.50	11.80	
	(Gain)	2.80	5.75	8.40	5.65
	Mean Gain	7.00	9.95	11.72	

*The standard deviations for the baseline, experimental, and gain scores were estimated from the within-cell variances in the analyses of variance.
SD for baseline scores = 2.57
SD for experimental scores = 7.79
SD for gain scores = 7.94

conferences increased their independent reading more than children who did not receive conferences and it made little difference whether the conference was conducted by a teacher or an aide.

Within each grade, the children had been divided prior to the experiment into high and low achievers on the basis of their reading-test scores. Since the reading tests used for this division in Grades 4 and 6 differed from that used in Grade 2, separate analyses were carried out to determine the effect of this achievement factor. The major results for the achievement level variable, which held true for all dependent variables, can be disposed of here. There was no differential gain in number of books, reading-value scores, or achievement scores across achievement levels as a function of conditions. To say this another way, any conclusions about the effectiveness of the conferences need not be qualified by the achievement level of the child receiving the conference. For both achievement levels, conferences led to greater gains in books read than no conferences.

Of course, within each grade there were some differences between the high and low achievers. In Grades 4 and 6, the high achievers gained significantly more than low achievers in number of books and reading-value score. In Grade 2 the low achievers gained significantly more in reading comprehension than did high achievers. Again, however, the differences between high and low achievers did not depend on the conference conditions.

READING-VALUE SCORES

Table 5 contains the mean reading-value scores for the baseline and experimental periods as a function of conditions for each grade. It will be remembered that the reading-value score denotes the average difficulty level of the books each child read. A score of 1 was assigned to a book below grade level; 2 was given to books at grade level; and 3 meant the book was above grade level.

In Grades 2 and 6, there were slight gains in reading-value for all conditions. In Grade 4, the reading-value scores decreased from the baseline to the experimental periods. Although there was a tendency for students receiving conferences to show greater gains in reading-value (or at least less loss in value in Grade 4), there were no significant differences in gains between conditions.

The difference between Grade 2 and the average gain of Grades 4 and 6 was marginally significant ($F = 3.22$; $df = 1,107$; $p < .07$). Grades 4 and 6 differed significantly ($F = 3.79$; $p < .05$). The significant differences in

Table 5

Mean Reading-Value Scores for the Baseline and Experimental Periods as a Function of Grade and Conference Condition*

Grade		Conference Condition			Mean Gain
		No-Conference	Teacher	Aide	
	Baseline	1.71	1.75	1.62	
2	Experimental	1.81	2.02	1.93	
	(Gain)	.10	.27	.31	.23
	Baseline	1.82	1.92	1.88	
4	Experimental	1.50	1.68	1.77	
	(Gain)	-.32	-.24	-.11	-.22
	Baseline	1.63	1.47	1.33	
6	Experimental	1.69	1.64	1.63	
	(Gain)	.06	.17	.30	.17
	Mean Gain	-.06	.08	.17	

*SD of baseline scores = .76
SD of experimental scores = .40
SD of gain scores = .79

GPO 817-109-3

gains between grades seems to be due largely to the fact that the Fourth Grade students decreased in reading value over the experimental period. Why this was the case is unclear, although the decrease was unrelated to conference condition.

It appears then that while the conferences resulted in an increase in the amount of independent reading, they did not significantly affect the difficulty level of the books read.

ACHIEVEMENT

Table 6 contains the average grade-equivalent scores in reading achievement for the baseline and experimental periods for Grade 2. Table 7 contains the achievement data for Grades 4 and 6. Scores for each grade are given separately for high and low achievement groups. The data for the teacher- and aide-conference groups were combined since these

Table 6

Mean Grade-Equivalent Scores in Reading Achievement* for the Baseline and Experimental Periods in Grade 2 as a Function of Conference Condition and Achievement Level

Achievement Level		Conference Condition			
		No-Conference		Conference	
		Vocabulary	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Comprehension
High	Baseline	2.0	2.6	2.2	2.3
	Experimental	2.9	2.8	3.3	2.6
	Gain	.9	.2	1.1	.3
Low	Baseline	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4
	Experimental	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Gain	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1

*Scores taken from Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Grade 2, Primary B.

Table 7

Mean Grade-Equivalent Scores in Reading Achievement* for the Baseline and Experimental Periods in Grades 4 and 6 as a Function of Conference Condition and Achievement Level

Grade	Achievement Level		Conference Condition	
			No-Conference	Conference
4	High	Baseline	4.3	4.5
		Experimental	6.1	5.6
		Gain	1.8	1.1
	Low	Baseline	2.2	2.2
		Experimental	4.0	4.2
		Gain	1.8	2.0
6	High	Baseline	7.4	7.2
		Experimental	7.6	7.8
		Gain	0.3	0.6
	Low	Baseline	4.0	5.2
		Experimental	4.7	5.8
		Gain	0.7	0.6

*Scores taken from Iowa Test of Basic Skills–Reading Skills Section.

groups did not differ. While the tables contain grade equivalent scores the analyses were carried out on raw scores. Separate analyses were done for Grade 2 and Grades 4 and 6.

In none of the grades was there a significant difference in amount of gain in achievement between the conference and no-conference conditions. This lack of difference between conditions was true for both high- and low-achieving students. In Grade 2, as noted previously, the students classified as low achievers gained more in comprehension than those students classified as high achievers ($F = 7.32$; $df = 1,40$; $p < .01$). In Grades 4 and 6 there was no difference between high and low achievers in amount of achievement gain. Students in Grade 4 showed greater gains than those in Grade 6 ($F = 26.70$; $df = 1,58$; $p < .01$).

One comment about the achievement gain scores is worth making here. The initially low-achievement students in all grades showed a remarkable amount of gain. Students in the Second Grade gained over a year in vocabulary and comprehension. Students in the Fourth Grade gained almost 2 years in achievement. The gain for the Sixth Grade low-achievers was practically a year. One usually does not expect this much growth from children below grade level. Since the no-conference groups showed as much growth as the experimental groups, the gain cannot be attributed solely to the reading conferences. However, the increased emphasis on reading in general and the new reading materials in the classrooms may have contributed to achievement growth in both groups.

COMPARISONS WITH IDEAL GROUPS

Data were also gathered on the independent reading of students in each grade who had been eliminated from the project because they already did a large amount of reading during the baseline period. It was of interest to find out how the students receiving conferences compared with these "ideal" students at the end of the experimental period. The comparisons were made separately for Grade 2 and Grades 4 and 6. In each analysis the low- and high-achievement students within the conference condition were compared separately to the ideal group for that grade.

In Grade 2, during the baseline period the ideal group read an average of 12.57 books while students in the conference condition (data combined for aide and teacher groups) who were high achievers read 4.15 and low achievers read 3.00 books in the same period. During the 8-week experimental period the students not in the project read an average of 19.36 books; those students receiving conferences read 17.08 and 17.58 books in the high- and low-achievement groups, respectively. Thus, the conference students of both high and low achievement read significantly fewer books than the ideal group during the baseline period ($F = 41.83$ and 58.83, respectively; $df = 1,43$; $p < .01$). However, neither of these groups differed from the ideal group at the end of the experimental period. The low-achievement conference students showed significantly greater gains in number of books than did the ideal students ($F = 6.01$; $df = 1,43$; $p < .05$). The difference in gain scores for the high-achievement conference group and the ideal group did not reach significance.

In Grade 4 during the baseline period the ideal group read an average of 13.43 books, the high-achieving students receiving conferences read 4.50 books, and the low-achieving conference students read 3.38. At the end of the experimental period the ideal students had read on the average 21.69 books, the high achievers 19.00, and the low achievers 11.00 books.

In Grade 6 the ideal group read an average of 14.36 books during the baseline period. The high and low achievers in the conference condition read 3.75 and 3.50 books, respectively. During the experimental period, the ideal group read 20.09 books; the high achievers read 14.25 and the low achievers read 8.43. Across Grades 4 and 6 the ideal group read significantly more books during the baseline period than both groups of students receiving conferences. After the conferences, however, the high achievers, at least, did not differ from the ideal students. Thus, the high achievers who received conferences made greater gains in amount of reading than did students in the ideal group ($F = 7.78$; $df = 1,69$; $p < .01$). The low-achieving students receiving conferences did not manage to narrow the gap between themselves and the ideal group.

Thus, in the Second Grade the conferences were effective in erasing differences in amount of reading between both the low- and high-achieving students who received them and those students who were assessed as already highly motivated readers during the baseline period. This is a particularly remarkable finding for those low-achieving students in the

conference condition because they were far below the ideal group in reading-achievement test scores. The high achievers in the conference condition were roughly equivalent to the ideal group in reading skill. Evidently the conferences provided these students with the motivation for independent reading which the students in the ideal group had all along.

In Grades 4 and 6 the conferences eliminated differences in reading between the high achievers in the conference condition and the ideal group but apparently at these grade levels the conferences were not sufficient to bring the low achievers up to the level of reading done by the students in the ideal group. It should be remembered, of course, that the low-achieving students did increase their amount of independent reading over the low-achieving students in the no-conference group.

IV
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

DISCUSSION

The major finding of the present study was that the conferences were effective in increasing the amount of independent reading engaged in by children. Both conference conditions resulted in greater gains in number of books over the no-conference condition from the baseline to the experimental period. This finding was not qualified by either the age or achievement level of the children. Whether the conferences were conducted by the child's homeroom teacher or an instructional aide made little difference in the effectiveness of the conferences in increasing reading. The finding concerning the relative effectiveness of teachers and aides in conducting conferences is of limited generality since only one instructional aide was employed. The conclusion, therefore, regarding teachers and aides must be considered tentative.

The differences in gains in number of books between the no-conference and conference conditions, while significant and substantial, were probably attentuated somewhat in this study. All children in Grades 2, 4, and 6 had access to the new and attractive books placed in each homeroom. The novelty of having the books available plus the attractiveness of the books surely introduced a motivating factor for the children in the no-conference condition as evidenced by their large gains from the baseline to experimental periods. It is likely that the motivation provided by the books would have declined when their novelty wore off. Thus, even larger differences between conference and no-conference conditions would be expected with a longer experimental period.

No differential gains in achievement were made by children in the conference conditions as compared to the no-conference children. Again, this may have been due to the relatively short time the conferences were in effect. In the Racine study (1968) impressive gains were made in reading achievement by children receiving conferences. While there was no control group in the Racine study, the gains far exceeded the expected gains for children initially below grade level. The conferences in Racine were conducted over a 9-month period, a far longer period than in the present study.

One of the encouraging results of the present study was the effectiveness of the conferences in raising at least some of the low readers up to the level of the children who were initially highly motivated to read. In the Second Grade even low-achieving students in the conference condition approached the level of the ideal group. Thus, not only were the children reading more after the conferences but they were reading at a desired absolute level. This result also was obtained for the high-achieving conference students in Grades 2, 4, and 6. Unfortunately, the conferences did not bring the low achievers in Grades 4 and 6 up to the ideal group. However, at least these students made substantial gains in independent reading.

CONCLUSIONS

During the 8-week period the conferences were in effect, they resulted in significant increases in the amount of reading engaged in by elementary school children. The increases were obtained with children in Grades 2, 4, and 6 and it is a reasonable assumption that all children of elementary school age would benefit from such conferences. The conferences were effective with children who were low in reading achievement as well as children who were initially high in reading achievement. The conferences did not result in differential gains in reading achievement probably due to the relative brevity of the experimental period.

The present study demonstrated that a relatively simple and inexpensive procedure such as the individual adult-child conference is effective in increasing the independent reading of children. It is impossible to reach any conclusions about the relative contribution of any one component of the conference

procedure to the obtained increases. It is probably the case that the individual attention, positive reinforcement, informative feedback, models of desired behaviors and the guidance in choices to which the children were exposed in the conferences all contributed in combination to increasing their motivation to engage in independent reading.

REFERENCES

Klausmeier, H. J., Schwenn, E. A., & Lamal, P. *A system of individually guided motivation.* Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning, 1969.

Klausmeier, H. J., Quilling, M., & Wardrop, J. L. Research and development activities in R & I Units of five elementary schools of Racine, Wisconsin, 1966–67. *Technical Report from Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning,* 1968. No. 52.

GPO 817–109–2